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DR. JOHN WALTON, YALE 1720*

ERNEST CAULFIELD

Among the rare books in the Sterling Memorial Library is a small volume which has been entirely overlooked by medical historians and yet should be of some interest because it is the first medical publication by a graduate of Yale. Otherwise the book has little to commend it, for it contains no original case descriptions, no startling discoveries, no experimental observations. Indeed, it is merely a scholastic exposition of an old medical theory which had already been discarded long before the book was written. Nor was the author himself of very great importance, and it may be questioned if he ever will be claimed as an illustrious son of Yale. Though equipped with some unusual talents and a good education, he was afflicted with an awkward vanity and an unattractive wilfulness and, as a consequence, his life was a succession of failures in many different professions. Sometimes commendable, more often infamous, never dull, he was an unusually interesting man, possibly because of his failures and his unpredictable reactions to them. But let it be said to his credit that when past middle age he seemed to sense his own weaknesses, was finally able to adapt himself to his social environment, to achieve distinction, and to command the respect of his fellow men.

It would be easy to over-emphasize Walton's imperfections and present him in an entirely unfavorable light, but I propose to deal with him as sympathetically as I can, not as a scientific genius nor a paragon of virtue, but simply as an intensely human character who is entitled to a little attention, at least, if only because he was the first of all the Yale men who have written on disease.

John Walton, Bachelor of Arts

John Walton, by far the most noteworthy of the host of Waltons that swarmed over New London and Windham Counties in the eighteenth century, was born on June 19, 1694, on a lonely backwoods farm in the north parish of Preston, now Griswold Township. His father, Laurence Walton, was an unobtrusive settler whose name cannot be found in the public records except as the husband

* Read before the Beaumont Medical Club, Oct. 9, 1936.

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of Margaret Smith and as the father of twelve children. He was not even a member of the church. Sometime between 1701 and 1710 the family moved to Norwich, probably because there were no schools in Preston at that time, but they continued to live in obscurity, later distinguished themselves only as a prolific crowd, and have long since been forgotten.

When twenty-two years old, Laurence Walton's oldest and favorite son went off to Yale to acquire a liberal education, but because of his humble origin was placed last in a class of ten.[1] He seems to have been an industrious student while at Yale and devoted most of his attention to theology, philosophy, logic, and the languages. Possibly influenced by the brilliant Jonathan Edwards, a classmate, Walton soon decided to prepare for the ministry, but mindful that he lacked some important qualifications he quietly slipped off to Canterbury, a very small town just north of his native Preston, where he was baptized, entered the Covenant (1718), and was admitted (1719) to the Congregational Church.[2] Judge Samuel Sewall records that he had a good character and "got his learning by great Industry, for want of Means."

A few weeks before he took his degree, and with the characteristic exuberance of an undergraduate, Walton wrote to John Winthrop[3] saying that he had composed a funeral elegy in honor of Governor Dudley of Massachusetts and, after casually mentioning a few prominent men as though they were old and very dear mutual friends, he slyly suggested that Winthrop should print the verses in New London. As a greater inducement he added:

> I have also thought to compose some verses on the eminent Major Winthrop; and I believe I shall do them in a little time if these I have made on y^e^ Governour Dudly be approv'd. Only I should be glad to receive a few lines from your self, in which please to tell whether there hath been many made already, & whether if I should make them well you would print them. The memory of great and good men should live to y^e^ worlds end. M^r^. Winthrop deserves verses fit to read in Old England as well as New.

Apparently Winthrop was not favorably impressed with the efforts of the young ambitious poet, but that did not discourage Walton nor dampen his poetic spirit. A few months later he made his first appearance in print with a broadside[4] entitled: *Some Funeral Verses occasioned by the Death of the Pious and much Lamented, Mr Jonathan French, of Vollentown.* Knowing Walton, I strongly

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suspect that these doleful lamentations in honor of Jonathan French were the same verses that had been originally composed to bemoan the passing of Governor Dudley except for an additional short verse called "An Epitaph" and a few consoling lines to the young and "vertuous" widow.

After his graduation Walton preached in Voluntown and at the same time taught schools in different sections of nearby Plainfield,[5] but in the spring of 1721 and at the request of the Rev. Joseph Morgan he left Voluntown and went to preach at Crosswicks, Allentown, and Cranbury in New Jersey. Aware of his own ability as an eloquent preacher, and his few months of practical experience having taught him how to use to best advantage his gestures, intonation, and command of learned thundering words, Walton strove to crown this golden opportunity with immediate success and before very long large numbers of people came from distant country towns to hear his instructive and inspiring sermons. Morgan wrote to Cotton Mather[6] that there had been no Presbyterian congregations in that vicinity and that

> Our ministrations were as little desired as enjoyed; but now, new congregations are formed, where formerly the people thought us as bad almost as Papists. I engaged Hook, the two Dickinsons, and Webb, to preach to them: the appearances were encouraging. I also prevailed with one from Yale, of my own town born, and he had double the good effect of all that were there before. . .

Morgan also wrote that Walton's preaching was greatly admired, that the people heard him "with many tears," and that he converted nearly all the people to the Presbyterian way. But the phenomenal rise of this brilliant young preacher soon came to an ignominious end, for Walton had been in New Jersey but a few months when he was accused of "a lustful carriage to some young women" of Newark. When the few bits of choice gossip had grown into a first-class countryside scandal, his neighboring fellow ministers, comprising the Presbytery, mortified by all this unpleasant publicity, met in Maidenhead, suspended him indefinitely, and published the sentence from the same pulpit where Walton, strange as it may seem, had been all this time fully expounding on the frightful consequences of iniquity. But complaining that he had been denied the opportunity to confront his accusers, Walton appealed to the more powerful Synod of Philadelphia. The Synod met in September, 1722, and, after listening

to an appropriate sermon by Jonathan Dickinson on "The Character of the Man of God," tried very seriously to be just and carefully considered the whole affair. Although they found that the Maidenhead Presbytery had acted unwisely in hearing only the unfavorable testimony, they nevertheless had some definite evidence that the accusations were indisputably true.

> And further, the Synod judgeth that Mr. Walton's behaviour towards, and treatment of the said Presbytery in many of his expressions, particularly those contained in his address to the Synod, wherein he designs them in general and particular, with diminutive and deriding titles, and speaks of them and their proceeding with an air of disdain, was very abusive and insolent, and every way unsuitable and unbecoming for any private Christian and much more a candidate for the ministry to use towards ministers of the gospel.

After more disrespectful behavior Walton finally repented and submitted a written confession which "surprised" many in that staid gathering, but the Synod reluctantly accepted the confession and sentenced him to be suspended from preaching in any place for the next three Sabbaths. His confession was then to be read publicly before the congregation at Newark, he was to be present and humbly acknowledge it as his own, and the suspension was then to be removed. On the appointed day, the minister who was to read the confession could not appear on account of illness, so Walton, to everyone's amazement, went boldly into the pulpit, hastily muttered his own confession and without as much as a "by your leave" quickly forgave himself.[7]

At the next annual meeting of the Synod it was decided that Walton's own impudence had prevented the suspension from being legally removed, so the Long Island Presbytery was asked to act as an interim committee and to hear him further before allowing him to preach. This Presbytery met in October, 1723, heard many more "scandalous allegations against him, by letters and otherwise, and his answers unto them," and unanimously concluded that the suspension was still in effect. They then summoned Walton, read their decision to him, and admonished him "to use more care, watchfulness, and circumspection for the future." Realizing that his best defense was an offense, Walton arose, vociferously disagreed with their decision, sneeringly declared that he wanted none of their uprighteous exhortations, that he had always thought the whole affair to be simply an intrigue, that he was willing to give them

just one more chance, and furious with haughty indignation turned on his heel and rushed away. "One from Connecticut," wrote Jedidiah Andrews to Cotton Mather, "that was like to have done much good in the Jerseys, has, by his nonsensical importunities and madness, lost his honour, and is gone."

Anticipating the outcome of his trial and suspecting that he was through with the ministry for evermore, Walton had meanwhile gone to New York City where, on Broad Street near the Exchange, he opened a night-school and advertised for pupils in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek. But within a few months, the night-school apparently having failed and the amenities of clerical life again becoming irresistible, he managed to get a call and soon resumed his preaching, this time in Eastchester, Westchester County, New York, in October, 1723. The people of Westchester County were mostly Presbyterians or Dissenters but, unorganized and without a settled minister, many had gradually been converted to the Church of England and willingly paid their tax for its support. But when the Episcopal minister tried to compel the others to pay their tax he was very much surprised to find them stubbornly opposed. According to the letters of another minister,[8] this opposition had been "instigated by a very troublesome fellow, one John Walton, who set up for a Teacher among them" and urged them to go to law against the collection of any tax. And the Rev. Mr. Wetmore adds:

> This Walton I before mentioned took an opportunity to get into the parish when there was a contest between the Rev. Mr. Jenny and the people, who . . . being now disaffected, readily fell in with this Walton, and being a bold, noisy fellow, of a voluble tongue, drew the greatest part of the town after him, and he has taken all imaginable pains to give them ill impressions of the church; he spurred them forward to build one meeting house at the White Plains, about six miles from the Church, and has set them on to build another in the town. . .

For some unknown reason, except perhaps that he loved showmanship and politics, Walton suddenly left this quarrelsome neighborhood and next appears in October, 1725, as a representative of Greenwich in the Connecticut General Assembly, but how he managed to get elected in a Connecticut town remains only one of the many inexplicable events of his career. There are bills extant[9] which he, as a member of a committee representing the lower house, prepared, but Greenwich had his valuable services for only one

session and he soon returned to his struggling Presbyterians in Rye. Not content with all the trouble he had caused in Westchester County he frequently preached in some neighboring Connecticut towns and apparently was very successful in disturbing the religious peace of Fairfield County, until finally even the Congregational ministers, becoming very much alarmed, solemnly warned[10] their people of his "Notorious Contempt of y^{e} Gospel Ministers and y^{e} Colledge Trustees." Apologetic and very reluctant to take such drastic steps they nevertheless considered it their painful duty publicly to expose Walton and his past:

> . . . We notify to our People, that y^{e} S^{d} Walton is a man, Whom y^{e} Grave Presbytery of New-Jersey, and the Venerable Synod of Philadelphia hath checkt with a frown Continuing unto this Day, and that they have forbade y^{e} S^{d} Walton to preach, as a man not worthy of that high and holy Improvement.
>
> We also notify to our People, that the S^{d} Walton is a man To whom the Reverend Trustees of New-Haven Colledge have refused a first and second time to give the Honor of a Colledge degree of Master of Arts. But that the S^{d} Walton against all proper Restraints hath dared to Intrude himself into y^{e} Ministry, and by a self-authority not Contented with such Place, as hath called him to preach, tho he hath been ministerially forbidden . . .
>
> We understanding Matters to be thus, Dare not with hold our Testimony, or Decline at this Day to give our Warning, that our People in this County,—Using Christian Caution, would Beware of him s^{d} Walton, in obedience to y^{e} Apostolical Precept phil. 3,2. Beware of Dogs, beware of Evil Workers, beware of the Concision; as also in Compliance with y^{e} Apostolical Intreaty—rom. 16.17. Now I beseech you Brethren, Mark them, which cause Division and Offences Contrary to y^{e} Doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them. vers. 18. ffor they are Such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Belly, and by good Words, and fair Speeches deceive the hearts of the Simple . . .

Walton now found that his voluble and persuasive tongue could bring forth plenty of tears but very little cash, and he had great difficulty in collecting money to build his churches. This time it was his turn to complain and, taking advantage of the antagonism that then existed between Congregationalists and Episcopalians, he drew up a memorial,[11] had it signed by sixty of his followers, and sent it to the Connecticut General Assembly in May, 1727. With flowery phrases and sugary words this petition, which was in Walton's hand and undoubtedly composed by him, bubbles over with an

unbecoming humility and meekness in its relation of the struggles with the obdurate Church of England and its request for permission to beg for funds in all Connecticut villages and towns. But probably because the Assembly had heard the warnings against Walton the "Humble Memorial of y^{e} Presbyterians" was unsuccessful. Later in 1727, however, the Trustees of Yale College became interested and offered their assistance to the people of Rye, and on receipt of a second, though less humble, petition the Assembly hastily granted the requests. Meanwhile something seems to have happened to Walton for instead of being the militant leader his name is nowhere to be found. Undoubtedly the subtle Yale Trustees, as compensation for their influence, had insisted on a "Minister of like Perswasion with Ourselves, capable and without offence" and thus, when all other means had failed, by a clever political maneuver had undermined the devotion of Walton's followers. According to one contemporary writer—"his haughty insolent behaviour drew upon him the displeasure of the dissenting teachers, on which account he removed from the parish . . ." of Rye in Feb., 1728.

John Walton, Minister of the Word of God

After leaving Rye, Walton spent a brief sojourn in Norwich* and then went to live in the Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, hoping to forget and hoping that no one there would know his eventful but unsuccessful past. Beginning in September, 1729, he preached periodically at the First Newport Church, having now become an ardent Baptist, partly, no doubt, because the Baptists prevailed in Rhode Island and partly because of his experiences with the other sects. Again he made a favorable first impression and in February, 1730, the Congregation asked "Mr. Walton to preach to y^{m}, and to settle among y^{m}, if it might be comfortable." But the Rev. John Comer intimates in his diary[12] that all was not well with this appointment and a few months later the congregation found it more "comfortable" to engage another minister.

Meanwhile, Walton had also been preaching at the First Baptist Church in Providence with some hopes of a settlement there,

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* I believe Walton was the anonymous author of *An Account of the Surprizing Events of Providence, which hapned at the Raising of a Bridge in Norwich, June 28th, 1728.*

but a bitter antagonism was aroused from his desire to introduce some new and liberal policies.[13] Among other things, he was heartily in favor of the congregation supporting the minister, at least by voluntary contributions. He seems to have won the good graces of Governor Joseph Jencks, an elder of the church, who wrote a very complimentary letter in his behalf. But the question of Walton's settlement divided the church for a long time and in June, 1731, he composed his *Letter to the Church Council*[14] justifying his behavior and beliefs. He was anything but tactful in his remarks about the opposition, but the conservative party, led by Deacon Winsor, finally prevailed and Walton is said to have "quitted the ministry, and followed other employments, whereby many were confirmed in their prejudices against him and his sentiments."

Walton may have given up active preaching but he did not abandon religion by any means, and in the next few years he published his religious tracts, most of them in vigorous defense of Baptist doctrine. His first was called *Remarks on Mr. Bulkly's Account of the Lyme Dispute* (1731)—a long well-written piece in answer to the Rev. John Bulkly's "scandalous and scurrilous Stories" about the Baptists. He is now "John Walton, B.A. & V.D.M."* This new title could be justified only by his few months as a settled minister in Newport because he certainly was not an ordained minister before he went to Rhode Island,—but, justified or not, what was a mere title to this man of many parts. A little while later in his subscription to Prince's *Chronology* he drops the V.D.M. and appears as "John Walton, M.A. of Providence." Since he had been twice refused an M.A. from Yale, it would be charitable to suppose that the M.A. was a misprint, but it is also possible that he was merely attempting to gain credit with the Boston intelligentsia. In his next appearance on a title page, however, he drops all of his degrees, both earned and assumed, and appears as a modest "Gentleman," but even this aroused the ire of some of his unappreciative contemporaries.

His next work, *The Religion of Jesus Vindicated* (1736), should never have been printed. It was directed ostensibly at the Deists but actually at the Quakers. Having previously classified the "Jews, Turks, Papists and Pagans" as a single group which was utterly beyond redemption, and having now slandered nearly

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* Verbi Dei Minister.

every religious denomination except his own, Walton unwittingly exposes himself as a hypocrite with his long pious pleas for religious tolerance. In the following year, one John Aplin, eager for an opportunity to attack, answered with a small pamphlet entitled *John Walton's Religion Proved Not to be The Religion of Jesus*. Most of Aplin's proofs consist of petty personal remarks and a few sarcastic observations on the title "Gentleman." He spares neither Walton's logic nor his past history, but without very much effect, for Walton by this time was neither sensitive nor modest and probably fully appreciated the publicity and also the compliment of having his name in print.

The most important, that is, if any can be called important, of Walton's religious writings pertain to a dispute with the Rev. Peter Clark. Here is a good example of one of those lengthy, tiresome, eighteenth-century pamphlet wars which generally began over some unimportant controversial subject, continued year after year without any regard for logic or the proprieties, and terminated only when the contestants became afflicted with a paralyzing writer's cramp or an acute attack of mental rigor mortis. The Clark-Walton fracas arose over a Mrs. Eunice Bound who had been baptized in Danvers by Clark, a Congregationalist, but she later moved to Sutton, where, influenced by the arguments of some Baptist preacher, probably Walton, she was rebaptized in the Baptist way. This irritated Peter Clark and he immediately wrote her a long letter (1731) about the true significance of her first baptism. In 1733, Walton wrote to Mrs. Bound, answering Peter Clark with his own opinions about "mere sprinkling" or as he sometimes called it "a pretence to baptism." In 1735 Clark published[15] all the correspondence, together with his own "animadversions thereon" which in turn was answered by Walton in 1738 and there, glory be, the arguments ended. As frequently happened in such disputes the writers gradually became very personal and though always very serious they were sometimes unintentionally humorous. Clark first referred to Walton as "a certain applauded teacher among the Anabaptists, who . . . has occasioned no small disturbance to several Parishes in this and a neighbouring Colony," whereupon Walton, who incidentally had repeatedly failed in his efforts to obtain a salaried position, haughtily accused Clark of being a minister for purely mercenary reasons. To this Clark replied that Walton was not only ambitious and conceited

but proud and corrupt. In one passage Walton's affected emotionalism carried him beyond his depth:

> And Oh! that you could know my soul's concern for this truth I am now about to maintain, and whilst I am composing these lines, how many flowing tears have been wiped from my weeping eyes, even eno' to have sullied this paper had they but drop'd thereon, to see the ordinances of Christ slighted by those who profess to love him and preach his gospel; . . .

Now this from the unmerciful, sarcastic Peter Clark:

> He is also careful to let you know what plenty of *tears flow'd from his weeping eyes,* whilst he was writing—I shall not take upon me to determine whether this were not a feigned passion to move your affections, as the language in which it is express'd would tempt one to think; yet those that know the author's true character will, perhaps, be able to judge whether there be not other things more nearly concerning himself, on which his tears would be more profitably bestow'd, . . . But since Mr. Walton joyns himself in the cause as a sufferer, he would do well to consider that the apostle makes a plain difference between *suffering as a christian, and suffering as a busy body in other mens matters.*

In many of these arguments poor John Walton had to suffer in silence, for it seems that no one would allow him to forget the indiscretions of his youth, but there is no need to waste much sympathy on this master of forensic art. Peter Clark, in his letter to Mrs. Bound, had argued that her rebaptism was entirely superfluous inasmuch as she had already been regularly baptized, and after all, he said, baptism and circumcision were fundamentally the same thing and if the Children of Israel didn't circumcise twice why should the Christians baptize twice. It was all a lot of nonsense thought Peter Clark. But the impertinent Walton wanted to know why, if baptism and circumcision were really one and the same thing, the Rev. Mr. Peter Clark baptized the females? And what is more, asks Walton in driving home his point, why doesn't the Rev. Peter Clark baptize on the same part of the body upon which he would do a circumcision?

As a parting shot, Walton wrote *A Vindication of the true Christian Baptism . . . wherein the principle Arguments of Mr. Peter Clark . . . are proved to be Fallacious.* This was merely a lengthy repetition of all his arguments concerning "Sprinkling" versus "Dipping," his numerous quotations from high authorities, and his flourishing displays of Latin, Greek, and etymology. But on the whole

he sounds very sincere and reasonable, and were his art of life not known, one would get the impression, no doubt intended, that he was the most upright, charitable, and scholarly minister in New England.

The *Vindication*, however, marks Walton's voluntary retirement as a Minister of the Word of God. It was a tardy but inevitable decision.

John Walton, Practitioner in Physick

Unable to convince the people of either Newport or Providence that his presence was necessary for their salvation, Walton began to realize that his usefulness as a preacher was rapidly vanishing and, although, as previously related, he continued to write in defense of his newly adopted religion, he decided to practice medicine for a living. His farm was located "in a wilderness" and since he was the most educated man available—he had an extensive library containing many medical books—it was natural that his neighbors should consult him in times of physical distress. Perhaps he dabbled in medicine when he first went to Rhode Island but the first real evidence comes out in his *Letter to the Church Council* (June, 1731) where, as an excuse for not appearing in person he says that ". . . my Business in Physick being such as I could not well leave Wherefore I am obliged to write to you in order to defend myself . . ." In 1732, he decided to try his hand at medical essays and in his first and only attempt frequently apologizes by saying that the wise and learned should be encouraged to study and practice the Art of Healing, especially in New England where "Empyrical Quacks" abounded and educated medical men were scarce.

An Essay on Fevers, the Rattles, & Canker (Boston, 1732) was actually two separate essays, each with its own title-page, but they were written, printed, and sold as one small volume. One can find no evidence that Walton had any more than a book knowledge of his subject, not even a short training under a preceptor. The *Essay*, however, reflects a good deal of study and no details were neglected in the exposition of his theory, and although he quotes Sydenham, Boerhaave, and numerous other well-known authors they apparently made little impression on him and consequently he was far behind the other medical men of his time. He frequently parades his knowledge of philosophy and logic; and also mentions nearly every drug in the pharmacopœia as though he were a master of therapeutics but he prescribes exactly the same remedies for nearly

all the diseases that eighteenth century flesh was heir to. With his life story in mind, one finds it difficult to be impartial in appraising Walton's *Essay*, but if it didn't advance, neither did it retard the progress of medical thought.

Although Walton believed that fever, heat, cold, sight, etc. were "Relative Ideas of the Soul," he belonged to the iatromathematical school and explained all diseases on purely mechanical principles. Accordingly, the circulating blood, after receiving good and bad particles from the food via the lymphatics, is purified in passing through the (lymph) *Glands*, *the Common Drains* (kidneys, salivary glands, etc.) and the *expurgatory Glands* (sweat) in the capillaries of the skin. The circulation is maintained by a *Momentum* derived from the air in the lungs, the contractions of the heart, and the elasticity of the *Solids* (tissues) surrounding the vessels. This *Momentum* hinders blood globules from cohering in large masses. Disease consists in an obstruction to either the circulation or the secretion of the *Vital Fluids* (saliva, urine, etc.). Circulatory obstructions occur most frequently in the glands and are generally caused by *Morbifick*, *viscid*, *sabulous*, *grumy*, *arsenical Particles*, which enter the blood through the lungs, skin, or intestines. The resulting disease depends upon the nature, site, and duration of the obstruction and whether the *Morbifick Particles* are large, sharp-pointed, round, conical, or cubical. Nature attempts to overcome obstructions and the effort, commotion, or struggling first produces a general shuddering and the "relative Idea called Cold" (chill); the continued violent struggling later produces "the relative Idea of Heat" (fever). If nature is successful and the obstruction is suddenly overcome (crisis) the blood rushes into the vacuum beyond the obstruction, the circulation is reestablished and the excess fluids are secreted by the *Common Drains* (sweating, diuresis, etc.). Medicines restore the elasticity of the *Fibres*, mechanically remove *Morbifick Particles*, and reestablish the secretion of the *Vital Fluids*. Bleeding is valuable only in certain disorders, such as too much fluid in the body or too many sticky particles within the vessels. The mechanics of bleeding depend upon the tourniquet which allows the production of a vacuum proximal to the point of application. On release of the tourniquet, the blood rushes into the vacuum and overcomes obstructions.

Walton's fame as a physician was not greatly enhanced by the printed word so he ceased trying to become medically famous and

began to devote more attention to his other occupations. He did, however, continue to practice for many years, as shown by a letter[16] dated from Glocester, October 31, 1744:

> These lines are to inform the Hon^{ble} Assembly That my Eldest Daughter lies sick with The Throat Distemper so I cannot just now attend to sit in the Assembly, but if she grows better so that I can leave her I shall very gladly go Directly and Take my Seat among you but if not I hope your Honours will excuse me especially if you consider that I lately lost one child & live in a wilderness where it is most Difficult to leave a small family, and more Especially since I practice Physick myself & profess to have the best skill in the Throat Distemper of any That I have been acquainted with, & my child is so bad that I have not undress'd myself for the four last Nights past, but have watch'd with her my self, this is what offers from Gentlemen
>
> Y^{r} very humble Serv^{t}
>
> JOHN WALTON

It is interesting that the newspapers[17] of 1787, twenty-three years after his death, should refer to this man as "Doctor Walton" in recognition of his ability as a physician in spite of his many other, and probably more important, professional pursuits.

John Walton, Lawyer and Politician

At forty years of age, and having failed as a poet, preacher, teacher, minister, farmer, and physician, John Walton finally turned to law and politics. It was a fortunate choice for, in spite of all his shortcomings, he had a good mind and a good education; he loved to argue and he was a born orator.

On his arrival in Rhode Island he very wisely made himself known to some of the most influential men in the Colony. It was Governor Joseph Jencks who recommended him as a preacher to the church in Providence and his entrance into the political field was as co-author with William Jencks, another man of affairs. Of prime political importance at that time was an argument between Rhode Island and Massachusetts over the boundaries of the Attleborough Gore, and Walton seized this opportunity to bring his name before the public. A small pamphlet was printed in Newport in 1731 entitled: *The Arguments of the Honourable William Jencks Esq.; and Mr. John Walton, B.A. & V.D.M. Against the rash and irregular Proceedings of the Province of Massachusetts Bay.*[18] No doubt because of the able presentation of the Rhode Island arguments

Walton was later chosen by the General Assembly to help represent the colony before the Boundary Commission, but this appointment also depended in part on the recommendation of William Jencks, who, in a letter to the deputy Governor,[19] said that Massachusetts intended to send at least nine men to present their side of the case. "Least they Should Drown us with a Great Noise," he advised that Walton should go with the Rhode Island contingent. Walton went to New London for the hearing[20] in July, 1733, and the following October the General Assembly, by special vote, allowed him forty shillings[21] for his efforts and admitted him a freeman of the Colony.[22]

There are many petitions to the General Assembly dated January, 1732/3, on which Walton's name appears as "Attorney for the Petitioner."[21] Thus at the same time he was practising law, writing his *Essay on Fevers*, and defending Baptist principles against the onslaughts of Peter Clark. But it is the law that interests him most and within a few years he wins definite recognition. He was one of the eight original members of the Rhode Island Bar, which first met in 1736 to draw up a petition to the General Assembly.[23] This document, now historically important, is interesting throughout but only a few lines need be quoted to illustrate some of the troubles of Walton and his colleagues. They stated that they had spent considerable time in studying the law, had sacrificed their other interests and gone to considerable expense, and they thought it was only fair that the Assembly should pass some "Restrictions and Regulations" which would protect them from some big Boston lawyers who had been coming down to Providence and encroaching upon their trade. The petition continues:

> We apprehend that we who are all that deserve the name of attornies in the Colony are sufficient for the Business of the Colony so that these Foreign Practicers coming in upon us & building upon our Labours draw and prepare all Cases before they come & gleaning our Client's Pockets, impoverish the Business to a great degree and render our Practice very mean & trifling.
>
> For as much as these Gentlemen who come most commonly from Boston and practice here travil a great way and receive large Fees, think themselves under a necessity of talking a great while & so retard the business of the Court by their long Flourishes, tire the Ears of the Judges with their needless Repititions & sometimes confound & perplex the Juries with their Circumlocutions & Sophistry so as to obscure & darken the Case more than if it had not been pleaded at all: And what is still worse have by their ill example made long haranguing more fashionable now a dais than clear & distinct Reasoning.

Walton very nearly put an end to his legal career in 1738 when he appeared in the case of *John Mason et al.* vs. *Connecticut Colony*.[24] We need not discuss the details of this famous case except to say that the commission appointed to hear the very conflicting evidence was composed of prominent New York and Rhode Island men and was scheduled to sit at Byram River (Greenwich); but the New York men withdrew early in the case and the proceedings were continued in Norwich. Now Walton probably knew the Masons and perhaps had a personal interest in the land involved, but he appeared, not as the lawyer for the Mason side but as a supposedly disinterested clerk. In the midst of the proceedings he suddenly surprised everyone with a long tirade about "Injustice and Treachery" and then resigned, leaving the spectators as well as subsequent historians puzzled by his peculiar behavior. His actions have been explained as the "feigned surprise of a disappointed land grabber" but a close analysis of the facts suggest a better explanation. It is more likely that he suddenly realized that he had made a serious blunder in appearing as an impartial clerk when he was really employed by the Masons, and finding himself, not in distant Greenwich with a commission of New York men as he had anticipated, but in his own home town surrounded by personal friends before whom he could not afford to be exposed as a tricky lawyer, he decided that the easiest way out was to resign. I think his pretended fit of anger was merely the dramatic flourish of a splendid actor. It was a narrow escape, but the scheme worked perfectly and apparently did no damage to his reputation.

Numerous interesting letters[25] to Thomas Rice, High Sheriff for the County of Providence, show that Walton had built up a considerable law practice by 1740. In a postscript to one letter he asks Rice to "please to come tomorrow for a Bag of Writs" and his signature by this time had acquired an impressive flourish. In 1741 he was appointed King's Attorney for Providence County[26] but even though he had taken "great Pains and used his Utmost Diligence Care & Industry in Prosecuting" many cases, his artistic temperament again got out of control and at the expiration of his term the Colony was obliged to bring suit to recover the "Bonds belonging and due to the Gen[l] Treasurer amounting to Two Thousand and Twenty Five Pounds and Sixpence." This suit was probably the result of some misunderstanding, because Walton doesn't seem to have suffered in the opinion of his contemporaries. In fact, he steadily con-

tinued to rise in his profession. During the next few years he occasionally appeared as Justice of the Peace, and in 1743 represented Glocester, his home town, in the General Assembly. In 1745 he again met with his colleagues to reorganize a bar association[27] and to draw up a schedule of fees. He reached the height of his career between 1749 and 1751, when he was chosen as an Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court. Thus he rose without any special legal training to nearly the highest honor that the Colony could give and it would be very unfair not to give him credit for possessing a great many excellent qualities even though they were not too apparent in his earlier days.

Conclusion

By 1754, Walton had reached his three score years and the paucity of notes and letters after this date probably reflect his gradual retirement, although he again represented Glocester in the General Assembly in 1757. A note by President Clap of Yale mentions his death in 1764, but no one seems to know where he died. There is a small note in the Connecticut Probate Records dated April 23, 1764, concerning a guardian for "Sarah Walton, a minor of the Town of Preston, Daughter of John Walton, late of Preston, Dec^{d}." so it is possible that he returned to his native town to spend his last few years. Though there are only a few legible stones in the old Walton cemetery on his father's original farm, perhaps he was buried there.

Walton's first wife, Miriam Ward, died in Providence in 1732; and his second wife, Susannah, died in Providence in 1787 "at an advanced age." A son, John Walton Jr., was born in Norwich in 1728* and was admitted a freeman of Rhode Island in 1745. He was very much like his father in many ways. He practised law, was a Justice of the Peace, represented Warwick in the General Assembly, and was clerk of the Inferior Court between 1750 and 1758. He also had a few mental quirks, and when his term expired the County was obliged to send a sheriff to get the official seal and documents. Another son, William (1735-1787), was born in Providence, lived in Pomfret for a while, and later (after 1767) in Salisbury, where he and his son, William (1759-1819), were well-known physicians.

* In Norwich Vital Records, July 5, 1728, Walton's wife is called Deborah—probably an error.

Other members of this branch represented Salisbury in the legislature. A daughter, Mary, was born in Warwick (1739) and another daughter, Marion, was born in Providence in 1741. She was the one who died from throat distemper, for a second daughter of the same name was born in September, 1745.

Most of the time the family lived on a farm in Glocester, a small town in northwest Rhode Island, but quite frequently Walton claimed either Warwick or Providence as his legal home.

John Walton's life was one of trial and error, which best explains many apparent contradictions. He was unquestionably a bright scholar, a very eloquent preacher, was widely read and maintained a studious attitude throughout his life, but he had an erratic temperament and an uncanny knack of doing or saying the wrong thing at the most inopportune moment. He was, if we can take his own word, liberal, sincere, humble, and very much abused, but in the words of his fellow men he was bold, haughty, insolent, and meddlesome. Confessing himself a Christian he could expediently adjust his religious cloak to every changing breeze, and while begging for sympathy and tolerance he could at the same time be narrow, abusive, and disdainful. He devoutly wished to be a minister but failed, and his efforts were repeatedly discounted as pride, ambition, and conceit; by mere chance he became a lawyer and was eminently successful. But we must remember that he lived at a time when men spoke freely of each other's frailties and good deeds frequently went unrecorded. In spite of all that was said against him there was probably much to admire in this headstrong child of the "Mother of Men."

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